

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS

Moderator: Rebekah Phillips
June 21, 2005
3:00 p.m. EDT

Deborah Backus: Hi. This is Deborah Backus from Boston, Mass., calling in from the Castle Square Tenants Organization. I just want to welcome everyone to the phone call today. And I'd like to talk some about the board structure that we have here at Castle Square since the subject is, "Serving Diverse Populations."

Rebekah Phillips: Just one second, Deborah. I would like to – this is Rebekah Phillips. Thank you very much for joining into the conference call, and good afternoon. The topic for today's call is, "Serving Diverse Populations." My name is Rebekah Phillips, and I am a Technical Assistance coordinator with Neighborhood Networks. I work with you to address the technical assistance needs of the various Neighborhood Networks around the country.

Just as a reminder, before I introduce our speakers for this afternoon, the Strategic Tracking And Reporting Tool, also known as the S.T.A.R.T. Business Plan, contains resource materials that help centers perform those surveys that are vital to the assessment of residents' interests and needs, as well as information on mapping assets in the community and crafting a marketing plan for the center.

START is also a key to developing partnerships, in that it strengthens the center's profile as a business and makes it more attractive to potential partners. These partners are essential when assisting residents in their pursuit of educational advancements, employment, or career growth.

If you have questions about the START Business Plan, resident surveys, marketing plans, or general questions pertaining to Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll free Neighborhood Networks information line at (888) 312-2743.

You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. Once again, the information line is (888) 312-2743, and the Web site is www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org. I also want to remind listeners that an audio and verbatim transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks Web site in about 2-weeks.

Now, about our topic for today. Regardless of where a center is located or what population it serves, it probably has to deal in some way with the issue of diversity, maybe differences in ages, educational levels, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic class, and the possibilities go on.

Most definitely, the ability to address the distinct needs of a culturally diverse population is of paramount importance to Neighborhood Networks center staff. The speakers who are joining us today will share their experiences and perspectives to help you understand how to provide services to a culturally diverse population. It is our hope that if our listeners serve a diverse population, that they will call in to reflect other ways that these issues have been addressed.

I would like to quickly share a success story with you, and may I remind you that success stories such as this can be found on the Neighborhood Networks Web site, www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org, and further, you can find out how to submit success stories on your own by calling the toll-free information line at (888) 312-2743.

Now, in Flushing, New York, at the Nathan I. Magler Computer Learning Center, the primary languages were Russian, Chinese, and very little English. To respond to the residents' needs, two special programs were established: English as a second language, also known as ESL, and classes in United States Citizenship.

The citizenship class was taught by a resident of the complex, a former English teacher from Russia. She had an affinity with the population and put them at ease. Also conquering language barriers – they also conquered language barriers by employing a translator in the center director's office, was one of the major factors for increasing resident involvement and programs at the center.

As the center director, Carlos Marero said, "In the past, groups of residents did not mix. Now they dance together." Finally, everything the center produces is offered in three languages, Russian, Chinese and English. The only thing that remained in English was the weekly movie night. Residents requested films in English only so that they could practice their skills and comprehension.

Now, to introduce our speakers. We have three speakers whose centers represent diverse populations: Jolene Anderson, program coordinator with Common Bond at the Skyline Tower Center in St. Paul, Minnesota; Nellie Johnson, vice president of Advantage Services with Common Bond in Minnesota, representing centers in Middle America that have a large Somalian population; and we have Deborah Backus, executive director of the Castle Square Tenants Organization in Boston, Massachusetts.

Ms. Backus' center was recently featured in a success story on the Neighborhood Networks Web site having recently received a grant to help advance their music programs for the young people at Castle Square. One of the technical assistance coordinators had the pleasure of visiting that

site and to see those young people in action creating music, doing homework, and really just using the center. And Castle Square has a large Asian population.

I assure you that these speakers will have a lot of information to offer with regard to dealing with the needs of diverse populations, and I hope that you will have questions for them that will help you with your residents. Deborah, would you like to continue?

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Rebekah Phillips: OK.

Deborah Backus: My name is Deborah Backus. I'm from Boston, Mass. I work for the Castle Square Tenants Organization who also owns the property at Castle Square Apartments and ten commercial properties. Our board is very diverse. Our board consists of Asians, Caucasians, and African-Americans. We recently had a vacant seat in our board, and we're reaching out to the Latino community and Ethiopian community, and on our flyers, we are putting down that we encourage Latinos and Ethiopians to apply for this position.

Also, we have teenagers that work at our technology center, and that's also diverse, which consists of Latino children, African-American, and Asians. And specifically with the Asian children working at the center, that helps out a lot because a lot of the parents that do come to the center, they do not speak English. So, our peer leaders are able to do the translation for us.

We offer a number of core services at the development, which is called the Fair Food Program- the technology center, and afterschool programs. And we also do summer employment programs where our CSTO puts up money to cover the salaries of the teenagers to work during the summer.

We also offer ESL training here. All information that is sent out from our office and the management company's office is in two languages, which is in English and Cantonese. I am an African-American that runs the office for the tenant council.

For 8-months, we were without an office manager because we felt it was important to have someone that was bilingual. So, I now have someone in the office that works part-time that comes in the morning that speaks Cantonese and then I have another worker that comes in, in the afternoon and evenings to work that speaks Cantonese. This way, I'm able to help all residents at the property regarding concerns that they have.

I think we're very lucky that the Ethiopian community that has moved in recently, the majority of them do speak English, so we don't have a problem in that area with the Ethiopians or the Latino community. So, it's mostly the Asian population where we have to do the translation.

Rebekah Phillips: OK.

Deborah Backus: We also, with the ESL training, we first start off in the community room with the blackboard. Once the Cantonese/Asian women are comfortable, we move them over to the computer lab where we have software from IBM to teach them English. And we felt this was a better instrument for them because not only at the same time while they're learning English, but they also are learning how to use the computer. And I will stop on that point.

Rebekah Phillips: OK.

Deborah Backus: And turn it over to Rebekah.

Rebekah Phillips: OK. Thank you, Deborah, for your presentation. I would now like to turn the call over to Jolene Anderson, and Nellie Johnson. Ladies?

Nellie Johnson: Thank you. This is Nellie Johnson from Common Bond. And Common Bond is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. We both develop, manage, as well as provide services within our communities. We have 54 housing communities. We house about 5,500 residents, and 1,400 of those residents are children. In the total number of units, we have about 3,800 units.

These comprise both senior buildings as well as family sites. Most of our diversity is within our family communities. We have 21 family communities with about 2,200 units and 4,000 residents. About 60 percent of our residents are immigrants and refugees primarily from East Africa, Somali, Ethiopia, Sudan.

We also have a concentration of Asians, which are Mong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. So, we do have a mixture of diversity within our housing communities. Our housing communities range from a very small community of eight units all the way up to a very large community of 504 units, and that is what Jolene manages and that is one that has an 80 percent East African population.

We have core programs that are across our sites. One that is particularly important is the individual services that we offer to the residents. We work closely with property management to get referrals for individuals that may be experiencing difficulties with their lease, with lease infractions, or non-payment of rent, and basically just understanding their lease obligations and so that they're not jeopardizing their housing.

So we work very closely in providing individual services, information and referral to the external community organizations. We also, at Common Bond, we offer services within our buildings that are called advantage centers. So, we have physical space within each of our communities that does have a technology computer lab as well as room for partner agencies to come in and provide services that meets the needs of that particular community.

We have a heavy focus on youth and academic programs, particularly during the school year. We provide one-on-one mentoring for children, which is called the Study Buddy Program, and also have a homework center, kind of more of a drop-in center, which we have found that works well, particularly with the older youth.

Our last core program is employment. We offer assistance to adults in our computer labs in helping them complete resumes and applying for jobs. And we have a more intensive program for placement of individuals in helping them actually do a job search, as well as do work-readiness coaching. And we've found this to be a particularly helpful program for those immigrants coming into the country who have not worked in one of our employer bases before.

Then, we also have specialty programs, which are really based on the community needs assessment, and this is where we end up bringing in partner agencies to provide the English as a second language, citizenship classes, also looking at having adult computer lab where we have bilingual staff that are able to assist the adults.

And depending upon the site, also have relationships with the school district where we can do some on-site early childhood programming. From a community-building standpoint, we try to help the residents get to know one another, get to know the services that are within the building. In one of our communities, we do pot lucks in the fall of each year, which is a good way for the community to get to know each other.

We really market a lot of the services through reaching out through the children who have, perhaps, more English skills developed than the parents and then they are able to participate in the activities and bring in the parents to some of the other events that are going on. Jolene, do you want to comment on Skyline in more detail?

Jolene Anderson: Yes, I'll talk about Skyline Tower where I'm the program coordinator of our center.

And we have, as Nellie said, many residents, about 1,000 residents, and most being immigrants, East African immigrants. Our programs are very varied and reflect the needs of our residents. We have an African credit education counseling service that comes in to talk about bank accounts and credits.

We have the book mobile that comes from the St. Paul Public Library. We have our career programs that Nellie talked about, our more intensive career advantage program where there's a case manager as well as a drop-in career resource center that people can receive drop-in assistance and not sign up for a program. We have two citizenship classes, one in the morning and one in the evening.

We have the computer lab, which is open Monday through Friday, many hours during the day with specific focuses sometimes on for adults only, sometimes it's specifically some educational and enrichment software for kids, sometimes English classes use the time, as well as just open times that residents may use the lab for whatever their needs are.

We have early childhood family education (ECFE) and school readiness onsite. We have three different English classes for residents participating at different times. We have a parenting class, a parenting lit class that focuses on parenting and learning English as well.

We have a food shelf onsite. We have a health connection advocate worker to help with healthcare needs. We have the youth program, which is a huge program divided up to serve kids in first through sixth grade and then in kids seventh through 12th grade during the school year with a big focus on homework and enrichment activities.

During the summer, there's a big focus on recreational and field trip activities and keeping the kids busy and productive in the summer. We have a photography club. We have a service

project club so that kids can volunteer, as well as trying to partner with community agencies to find kids jobs and to sign them up for other programs. So, that's a bit about Skyline Tower itself.

Nellie Johnson: One of the other things as far as advertising or publicizing the programs and getting engagement of the communities, we do a monthly newsletter where we feature a calendar of events that's happening within the center as well as a list of the key community agencies that most of the residents would use. Each of these newsletters are tailored to that particular community, and we have found that helpful. But in many of the communities that have a high penetration of immigrants, the written word or flyers don't really work that well.

So in some of the cases for promotion of our programs, we have actually done a job fair where we have, we put a table out into the reception area and talk with the residents about the different activities that we've got going on, for example, related to jobs, or for signing up for our summer activities and have to real outreach even on knocking on doors and telephoning people to remind them of – that oral type of communication is very, has been very important in increasing participation in the various events that we've got going on.

And I think lastly is the relationship with property management on the orientation side. And one of the special programs we've developed is called Family Life in America. And that is it's kind of understanding, you know, how to use some of the appliances in the apartment, how to use the shower system, how to use the garbage disposal...the trash chute in the building, things that they may not have been exposed to in their homeland and they're coming into an apartment building, and that just helps them adapt.

And Family Life in America goes on further to really talk to them about how to access your school system, how to get, you know, sign up for medical appointments, and use their insurance. So it really goes over some of the basics as far as helping them to adjust to their new home. So, those are some of the highlights of our program. I turn it back to you, Rebekah.

Rebekah Phillips: OK. Thank you, ladies. Before we go into questions, I would like to just let everyone know that Neighborhood Networks Week is going to be August 1st through 6th, and we encourage you to start planning today for the 5th annual Neighborhood Networks week.

It's one of the great big showcases for Neighborhood Networks successes, and you would hold an event in your community and open doors to new possibilities. You can find more information about Neighborhood Networks Week on the Web site at [www. NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org), or you can call in for information at (888) 312-2743. Amy, I would now like to open up the lines for questions. Is there anyone in the queue?

Operator: Thank you, ma'am. Our question and answer session will be conducted electronically. If you would like to ask a question, please press the star key followed by the digit one on your telephone. If you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off in order for your signal to reach our equipment.

We will proceed in the order that you signal us and will take as many questions as time permits. Once again, that is star one. And we will pause for just a moment. And our first question comes from Orlando Lorie.

Orlando Lorie: Hi. I have question in reference to the definition of Latino. This is in Boston, right?

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Orlando Lorie: What do they consider Latino? Or what is a Latino?

Deborah Backus: We consider it the Spanish population.

Orlando Lorie: Which, I mean, is it Puerto Rican...

Deborah Backus: Majority I would say is Puerto Rican here.

Orlando Lorie: Okay, because...

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Orlando Lorie: ...in Texas, I'm in Texas, Lubbock, Texas, and they don't use the word Latino.

Deborah Backus: Okay. This is what we use in Boston.

Orlando Lorie: Yes. The other question is in terms of how many years or – I'm listening to immigrants trying to learn a new way of life. How many years have they been in this country, in the average?

Jolene Anderson: Our residents have been here, on the average, we have some people who are newly arrived to the country as well as people who have been here for many, many years and are established within the community.

Orlando Lorie: But they're within their own culture centers?

Jolene Anderson: I'm sorry. I missed part of that.

Orlando Lorie: They're all within their own culture center and that's why they haven't been able to learn English and go ahead and assimilate better into the general population? Is that what you're saying?

Jolene Anderson: No. What I'm saying is that people who are newly arrived here or are just learning English are the ones who mostly utilize our services, like the English classes, or elderly people who don't – aren't trying to get out into the job workforce.

People who have been here many years sometimes do know English very well and are working and are established and don't need as many of our services, except maybe the computer lab or the youth program for their kids doing homework, things like that.

Deborah Backus: Yes, I would say that's the same for Castle Square also.

Orlando Lorie: And their immigration status, are they all residents, green cards, or we don't know?

Deborah Backus: At Castle Square they are citizens.

Orlando Lorie: Okay. So they are U.S. citizens.

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Orlando Lorie: And in – I mean, across the country I know in Texas we do have a little different situation than may be in Boston or in maybe Minneapolis, Minnesota. Thank you very much.

Jolene Anderson: Thank you.

Deborah Backus: You're welcome.

Nellie Johnson: At Common Bond if I can answer that question. We have a combination of refugees for people who have been here less than 5 years who are not citizens. So, we do citizenship classes to help them become citizens. So, we have a mixture.

We also, as one of our programs, as a learning – as they really improve on their employment status and their income levels, we work with the individuals to help them move out to market rental and purchase homes. We have about 120 households that move out each year to market rental or to purchase their own home.

Orlando Lorie: Yes, I have another question. What's your biggest challenge as you get into some of these neighborhoods and try to open up the center?

Deborah Backus: I think at Castle Square our biggest challenge is to get the parents involved. We have better luck at getting the children involved thru the different activities that we offer here, but it has been difficult getting the adults enrolled.

At the Roxbury Community College, which is located about a mile from here, there is a non-profit organization that was just set up for Somalians. So, we'll be reaching out to that agency to help us with our Somalian community.

Jolene Anderson: I was going to add that we also – the kids come very readily to our programs, and we use them to do outreach to their parents and adults in the buildings then. So, that's one thing, too, adults, getting up – starting up new programs.

Established programs are fine. Our attendance at all of our English class, citizenship class and the career programs is really good, but we start up a new program doing outreach to adults is always a challenge, so that's how we have to be really creative on how to go about doing that.

Orlando Lorie: The West Texas issue is the same. The parents sometimes feel that the kids know more than them and they feel embarrassed. And that's why sometimes the difference between the parents and kids is a big issue, and somehow you have to kind of sneak the parents in the

computer room and see if you can start teaching them so that the kids don't feel like – the parents don't feel bad about it, and that's one of the issues that I'm seeing here in Texas.

Jolene Anderson: Right.

Deborah Backus: Yes, because at our center we have, you know, specific hours that are just for the adults to use the center because it is true. Some of them are uncomfortable with having the children in the center at the same time they're there. And I think some of that is due to embarrassment regarding their English.

Orlando Lorie: Right. And even the technology piece, which is what I'm more interested in, is it's difficult for the older to concentrate when the children are telling, "This is what you do, Dad. Poppy, this is what I do."

Deborah Backus: Recently I was at a conference, the CTC (Net) conference last week in Cleveland, Ohio.

Orlando Lorie: Yes.

Deborah Backus: And in one of the workshops dealt with ESL classes in the computer room. And IBM has software for ESL classes, and within the software are different books. And the books help them, how do you read a prescription bottle, how do you contact your doctor to make an appointment, how do you talk to your job to say that you need a half day off?

It also has citizenship in there, how to apply for your driving test, and a lot of other different areas within that software. So, I would recommend – the software is free through IBM. And you just go to IBM grants and you can find the software there, and it is free.

Orlando Lorie: Here in Texas, we have a nonprofit that has an affiliation with University of Monterey, and they're doing the same thing through a Spanish, they call it community centers or centers humanitarians. And they're actually – they're building this direct line of the Spanish, more Mexican dialect, or Mexican words minus the Latino words, and the center is basically free to anybody.

The big issue is trying to connect the center with some of the buildings or some- of the potential neighborhood centers so that in Spanish, since the population here is 40 to 50- percent Spanish and they don't necessarily know how to read, that is the big challenge down here.

Rebekah Phillips: Jolene?

Jolene Anderson: Yes?

Rebekah Phillips: Would you be able to provide us with that information regarding the IBM program that's free of charge?

Deborah Backus: Yes. I can provide you that information.

Rebekah Phillips: What is that Web site again?

Deborah Backus: It's IBM. Just go to the IBM Web site.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. Thank you.

Deborah Backus: And...

Rebekah Phillips: Are there any other questions in the queue?

Operator: Yes, ma'am. We have a question from Karen Godfrey.

Eileen Howard: Yes. Hi. This is Eileen Howard. I'm here with Karen Godfrey. I came in after she signed on, but I've been hearing what you all have had to say. My question again is for (Lori) in Boston. One of the questions I have is along with your Hispanic or your Latino population; do you find that you have a large calling or a need for Cape Verdian immigrants in there? I know it has been in the past and I was wondering if it is still something that they extend any services to.

Deborah Backus: We have a few Cape Verdian residents that live here, but they've lived here, but they've lived here for the past 30 years. So there hasn't been, you know, any new residents moving in.

Eileen Howard: Oh, okay. Just moving into that area but...

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Eileen Howard: Okay.

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Eileen Howard: Okay. Because I know...

Deborah Backus: I mean, there is a large Cape Verdian population presently here at Castle Square, which is the south end of Boston. The Cape Verdian community is more towards Roxbury, Dorchester area. That's probably about three miles from here.

Eileen Howard: Right. I'm familiar with it.

Deborah Backus: Oh, okay.

Eileen Howard: I raise that question because I'm from there. It's good to hear your end.

Deborah Backus: Yes. And they've opened up a number of restaurants and businesses also.

Eileen Howard: Right. Yes.

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Eileen Howard: OK. I know this has nothing to do with the conference call, but I would love to see your program when I come up that way in August, if that's possible. We're calling from a program and we have the similar issues that you – I've been listening to here.

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Eileen Howard: I'd really like to be – I'd be interested in seeing how your program works, if that's OK to do a visit with you?

Deborah Backus: Oh, okay then.

Eileen Howard: Okay.

Deborah Backus: Let me have your phone number.

Eileen Howard: Okay. My phone number is area code...

Rebekah Phillips: Hey. I will get that information and...

Deborah Backus: Okay.

Rebekah Phillips: ...transfer it to...

Deborah Backus: Okay.

Eileen Howard: Mail it to me. Thank you.

Deborah Backus: You're welcome.

Eileen Howard: Okay. I also have a question a little bit further on that. Our population is mostly Asian from Vietnamese population...

Deborah Backus: Okay. We have...

Eileen Howard: ...Bosnian, Albanian and from other countries, and we also have a new trend of families that are moving in now from Afghanistan. And because.. that's one of our challenges is translating and getting information out. And we've sort of been doing the same thing, providing the basic living skills as what you were calling the...

Deborah Backus: The IBM software.

Eileen Howard: ...right.

Deborah Backus: Yes.

Eileen Howard: Right. The Family Life in America. We've been doing that similar program, teaching them how to even just use their thermostats in the apartments that they're living in. But our program – and I don't know if I should back up on this, is Community Connections. And it used to be – it was formerly the YWCA, which I'm sure you're more familiar with, but our name changed about 6-years ago.

We're one of 10 sites in the greater Jacksonville area. Ours is located onsite in a housing development of 200 apartments servicing 200 families. And like I said, a large population are non-English speaking, which is our biggest challenge is getting information, getting them to the work world, getting them services and not having an on-site translator.

So, we depend a lot on networking with neighborhood agencies and neighborhood organizations such as Lutheran Social Services. That is our biggest challenge right now. The children's part of it runs – we're running it in the middle of the summer, camp at this point, to service all the children not only within the housing that we are in but also in the outlying community.

The area is the Pine Larson area, which is one of the mayor's intensive care areas, and everything that we're listening to, Karen and I both are sitting here saying, "Wow, this is so similar. They have the same kinds of problems, that we have the same challenges, the same, almost the same services." So, I'm really glad that we joined in this conference call, you all.

Rebekah Phillips: Thank you. Are there any other questions in the queue, Amy?

Operator: Yes, ma'am. We'll now hear from Michele Higgs.

Michele Higgs: Yes. Hello. Forgive me. I have a little scratchy voice, a bit of a cold. But one of the things that I was hearing, I think it was Jolene or it might have been Nellie, when you were talking about the citizenship classes. I think you mentioned the ladies participated. So, my question was

in terms of diversity, are you getting gentlemen as well as ladies to participate in these programs?
Or are they leading the way, are the women leading the way?

Jolene Anderson: We do now have both men and women participating. And sometimes it is – it just depends on what the class is serving. For example, we have a class that fulfills the requirements if you're receiving a TANF or welfare that you have to have so many hours of English class a week. And most of those participants are women.

Michele Higgs: Yes.

Jolene Anderson: However, just the general English class that anybody can participate in are mostly elderly men, but with some women in it, too. So it is both. It's taken a while that more men have come on board, especially with English class. But it's happening now.

Michele Higgs: Oh, okay. So there's no sort of special outreach that you feel is required. They do participate?

Jolene Anderson: Right. Yes. We just do outreach in general.

Michele Higgs: Okay, okay. Thank you very much.

Jolene Anderson: Thank you.

Operator: And now we'll hear from Joseph Mayerhoff.

Joseph Meyerhoff: Good afternoon. I thank you for a very interesting presentation. Our center, which is located in Williamsburg, New York in Brooklyn, deals with a population that speaks some English but all Spanish. And what we've been able to do to bring people into our center are two

things. One, we do provide an ESL program that – we're not a 501(c)(3), so – or 504(c)(3). So, we don't – very often it's hard to get grant money.

But what did was we found an ESL program that was on sale in CompUSA for about \$12 and bought one for each computer that we have so we're able to license it, and people come in and take the ESL course online on this program at their own pace and they're very happy with it.

Another thing that we've done is we've purchased Native Speak and Typing program in Spanish so that people can work a program in their native language and get interested in the other programs in our center in that way. Our center is almost exclusively a computer center.

We teach basic computer skills, some job training, some job search clients and job search assistance. But we gear ourselves to a community whose first language is Spanish. Not too many recent immigrants but largely a Spanish-speaking population.

Rebekah Phillips: Amy?

Operator: Yes, ma'am.

Rebekah Phillips: Are there any other questions in the queue?

Operator: There are no questions at this time. However, to give everyone another opportunity, it is star one.

Rebekah Phillips: Ladies, I would just like to ask a quick question myself. What type of partnerships – I know you spoke about a few earlier, but what types of partnerships, if you could expand on those, were you able to form to help raise the diversity issue?

Deborah Backus: Well, here at Castle Square we have a partnership with an agency called the Chinese Progressive Association. And they also help with housing issues, also voter rights, and citizenship. So, we use them a lot. Also, because we encourage residents to participate in the decision-making process at Castle Square that on our board of directors and our committees that we encourage those who do not speak English to still join their committees, and we do allow for translation in our meetings. Also, in our general membership meetings, those are also translated, too.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. Okay. Thank you. Jolene?

Jolene Anderson: Yes?

Rebekah Phillips: If you could share with us a success story from your center, if you have one in mind?

Jolene Anderson: I could do that, but I was also just going to talk briefly about partnerships that you just asked about...

Rebekah Phillips: Okay.

Jolene Anderson: ...and let you know that we partner with a variety of agencies here at Skyline Tower. There are 10 different partnerships that we have. And we do a really – try and do a really good job of partnering with other agencies that have similar missions and want to do outreach with diverse populations.

And so the public schools here we have a partnership with, and the neighborhood literacy council, which is really concerned with adult education, citizenship and English class, as well as individual organizations, like the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, that really wanted to outreach in

specific communities that they felt they weren't being able to outreach for in a different way. So, we partner with those organizations that have a similar goal in that way, too.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay.

Nellie Johnson: I'd like to just comment as well, before I talk about that success story. The other way that we have approached bringing in some services is we have worked with our state refugee agency, and that is where all the federal dollars kind of flow through the state agency and then they contract out with community providers.

And we wrote a grant – we wrote two grants specifically to work at Skyline and work with our diverse population. One was a refugee assistance program working with refugees here less than five years, really targeting the integration, the employment side of it.

And the other one was working with a foundation to work on health disparity issues to help the population, the residents, hook up to the healthcare system so that they were using the clinics versus using the emergency rooms and they were following immunization schedules for their children so that they were ready for school. So there are some ways to capture dollars that really have enabled us to hire some bilingual staff that we probably couldn't have afforded to before and reaching out to organizations that help us fund those initiatives.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. And do you work at all with the Office of Refugee Resettlement?

Nellie Johnson: Yes. That's our state agency.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. Okay. All right. Do you focus solely on centers or do you attempt to tackle diversity in the surrounding community as well?

Nellie Johnson: We really focus – our services are within our housing communities, but we do look at how our housing community residents are integrated into the broader community. But our services are really targeted to the residents who live in our communities.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. All right. Amy, do we have any other questions?

Operator: Yes, ma'am. We'll hear now from Emeri Ndukwe.

Emeri Ndukwe: Good afternoon. I'm just curious because when you talk about people from Africa, you mainly talk about East African, Somalian. I'm just wondering, do you have any thoughts (absolutely) for those from the west coast of Africa?

Deborah Backus: Not at Castle Square.

Jolene Anderson: Not really at Skyline Tower or at other Common Bond states, really. Mostly East African.

Emeri Ndukwe: Is there any place that's (starting agencies) for the West Africans, do you know?

Nellie Johnson: The housing – our housing is HUD housing, and so it's open based on applications of who applies, and it's taken in order of application. So, it tends to be that they've clustered – for example, the Somalis tend to cluster and live around each other so that when we have a community, we tend to have more of the Somalis living with each other.

We just don't have a community located more in the western, Jolene, in the Western part of Hennepin County in Minnesota, where the West Africans have really formed communities. We just don't have any community sites that are located there.

Emeri Ndukwe: Okay. Thank you.

Deborah Backus: There is an agency at Roxbury Community College that you could contact, Roxbury Community College in Boston, Mass.

Emeri Ndukwe: Okay.

Deborah Backus: The organization is called ACEDONE, A-C-E-D-O-N-E.

Emeri Ndukwe: C-D-O ...

Deborah Backus: N-E.

Emeri Ndukwe: ... N-E.

Deborah Backus: Yes. And I believe they may be able to help you.

Emeri Ndukwe: Okay. Thanks.

Deborah Backus: You're welcome.

Operator: And now we'll have a follow up from Michelle Higgs.

Michelle Higgs: Just a quick one on the assimilation skills, teaching folks how to basically maneuver in society, teaching them about writing their – you know, paying their rent and doing the things that they have to do to live.

I think, Deborah, you mentioned it. There was a computer program, an IBM program that was helpful. But what I wanted to find out is do, from Jolene and Nellie; do you all have volunteers working with your people? Are materials printed up in different languages?

I mean, how do you go about – those kinds of activities are key to making it from one day to the next, and very important in getting people assimilated into the culture. And I just wanted to find out exactly how that is approached.

Jolene Anderson: We definitely use volunteers a lot here, especially youth programs and adult tutoring, helping them find a job and in the computer lab.

Michelle Higgs: Yes.

Jolene Anderson: We really use volunteers heavily and we recruit volunteers in the community and form partnerships with like businesses and other organizations to find us volunteers. Definitely, because we see the need that sometimes people need one-on-one or need one-on-one assistance, just to talk about things further or more assistance...

Michelle Higgs: Yes.

Jolene Anderson: ...for adult tutoring, if they're trying to earn a degree or diploma or something, for sure.

Michelle Higgs: Okay. And that's the kind of thing I was thinking of. With those kinds of activities, it seems like a class might, you know, be a good beginning, but then there would need to be, you know, some sort of one-on-one kind of communication to be sure that the residents are actually getting it and able to use the skills that they're – well, they know them but just are new.

Jolene Anderson: Right.

Michelle Higgs: Yes. Thank you much.

Operator: And there are no further questions at this time.

Rebekah Phillips: Okay. Well, it looks like we have just a few minutes left. And if there are no more questions, I would definitely like to thank our guest speakers today, Deborah Backus, Jolene Anderson, and Nellie Johnson.

I would also like to remind you that resources are available through the Neighborhood Networks initiatives. Aside from the Neighborhood Networks information center's line at (888) 312-2743, you may find numerous resources and information on the Neighborhood Networks at www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org on the Web site. You will see success stories, best practices that may spark an idea for you or validate a plan that you have been considering for your center.

I'd like to thank you so much for joining us in this conversation today and to remind you that our 10th anniversary Neighborhood Networks national training conference will take place in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, from June 29th through July 1st, 2005.

Further, our next conference call will occur on Tuesday, July 26th, 2005, on the topic of financial literacy training as a Neighborhood Networks service. I hope you will participate then and thanks again for joining us today. And take good care.

Nellie Johnson: Thank you.

Jolene Anderson: Thank you.

Deborah Backus: Thank you.

Operator: That does conclude today's conference. We thank you for your participation.

END